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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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S/S

July 8, 1976

TO : The Secretary

FROM: IO - Samuel W. Lewis *SWL*

Results of the ILO Conferences

The early returns on our efforts to mobilize support from our industrial allies on ILO matters have been impressive, if not yet conclusive. We achieved nearly all of our objectives at two important conferences held last month in Geneva -- the ILO General Conference and the World Employment Conference. We also managed to hold divisive political issues to a minimum and to keep the USSR and EE delegations on the defensive.

The ILO's system of tripartism proved to be stronger than the tendency of the G-77 and Communist countries to engage in bloc voting. The concerted efforts of the worker and employer groups, in support of the industrialized countries' positions, were of primary importance in fracturing these usually strong voting blocs. Also responsible for the lack of unity between these countries was the quiet resentment among many G-77 countries for the heavy-handed way a few G-77 governments (particularly Cuba, Mexico and Algeria) tried to manipulate the entire group.

As a result of this disunity, political issues did not play a major role in the work of either conference. Although the PLO was granted observer status in the WEC, a PLO representative addressed the WEC plenary on only one occasion, during which the entire US delegation withdrew from the hall.

The USSR was criticized and the Soviet bloc was rebuffed in the General Conference. The Committee on the Application of Conventions took the Soviets to task for the way they implement ILO Conventions on Forced Labor and Freedom of Association. The Committee's report "sharply requests" the Soviet Government "to come to grips

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with specific questions" raised by the Committee on these issues. The East European bloc was further rebuffed by a refusal of the General Conference's Resolutions Committee to consider three political resolutions submitted by a coalition of Communist worker delegates. This result was achieved through a boycott of Committee sessions by non-Communist worker groups and a decision not to participate by other non-Communist representatives including the US Government Delegation.

Other developments at the Conferences included:

-- the failure (for lack of a quorum) of the General Conference to accept a minority report of the Credentials Committee which called for the rejection of the credentials of the Chilean Worker Delegation. The US Government and Employer delegates, along with most European and Latin American government delegates, abstained on this issue while the US Worker delegate voted in favor of invalidation.

-- the unanimous adoption of a draft resolution by the Workers Group condemning apartheid and calling for an international trade union conference against apartheid in 1977. However, no formal ILO resolution was passed.

-- the absence of an expected G-77 call for a constitutional convention to "democratize the ILO", a convention which would almost certainly have pressed for amendments diluting both tripartism and the relative power of the most advanced industrialized states while simultaneously introducing regionalism into ILO procedures. The G-77 lacked the necessary support to transfer power from the ILO Governing Body (where the US has a stronger influence) to the General Conference which is dominated by the G-77.

The AFL-CIO and the US Government delegation were both pleasantly surprised and encouraged by the Conference results. Although our assessment of recent ILO developments should probably be considered "cautiously favorable", American efforts to reform the organization and to round up support among industrialized countries for US positions do appear to be meeting with some success. Such efforts should be maintained as we further consider the question of continued US participation in the ILO.